

Outbreak of Birchism

Breaking out in assorted and strange places throughout the nation is a sect known as the John Birch Society. The name of John Birch Society, however, is nearly always concealed behind some "front" organization. The March 10 issue of Time Magazine contains a rather timely rundown on this organization.

"In other times, other places, the John Birch Americanists—as they call themselves—might seem a tiresome, comic opera joke," notes Time. "But already the society admits to cells in 35 states, and its partisans have made their anonymous and unsettling presence felt in scores of U.S. communities."

The Time article relates that the society has as its top project the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren, "and activities in a dozen cities range from the 'spontaneous' circulation of petitions to a rash of letters to newspapers and a 'Help Impeach Earl Warren' banner strung across the main street of Pampa, Texas (and taken down by the police a few hours later)."

According to Time, the society is named for a U.S. Navy captain killed by Chinese communist guerrillas after V-J Day. It was founded by Robert Welch, son of a North Carolina farmer. After the war Welch, a candy-making executive, began to read Communist literature and eventually decided that such schemes as social security and federal income tax laws were part of a Red plot to ready the U.S. for Russian conquest. He left the candy-making job for a fulltime one as an anti-Communist pamphleteer.

Welch also put out a book called "The Politician," which is now being withdrawn from circulation "largely because its judgments on contemporary leaders repelled more people than they attracted," Time declares. For instance, says Time, Welch said "there is only one way possible to describe his (Former President Eisenhower) purposes and his actions. That word is treason."

According to Time, Welch characterized both CIA Director Allen Dulles and the late John Foster Dulles as supporters of communism.

Said one conservative who backed away from Birchism after a glimpse at "The Politician": "It siphons a lot of well-meaning, respectable people off into a lunatic fringe run by Welch, at the same time giving anti-Communist efforts a black eye. It hurts us more than it helps us."

There reportedly has been activity on the part of elements of this fringe group in Dallas and other Texas cities.

The sect, in various degrees, has virtually labeled our last three presidents traitors. Certain church groups also have been targets. The technique seems to be to act secretly, hit at persons or institutions it does not like using bald intimidation and innuendo methods which reached their zenith in the days of rampant Earthism.

Most fringe groups, however, are not as organized as the John Birch Society. They are often just a group of people who share a common view of the world and who are willing to act on it.